



BAPTIST PRESS

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Israel Names Arab Baptist To Government Post

HAIFA, Israel (BP)--Ibrahim Sim'an, a 35-year-old Arab Baptist lay-leader here, has been named as the main assistant for Haifa and north Israel for the Christian Department of Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The position had been filled previously by Jewish Israelis, according to Southern Baptist representatives in Israel. Sim'an is the first Christian to serve the Ministry of Religious Affairs on an administrative level.

Sim'an has worked with Baptists in the Galilee since 1965, serving as translator and assistant to the director of the Christian Service Training Center (CSTC), operated by the Southern Baptist mission, and more recently as editor of Al-Jama'ah, the Arabic Baptist paper.

The Arab Christian layman said his new responsibilities include maintaining good relations between and contact with all Christian communities for the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

He believes that his appointment as an Arab Christian to the new position marks a good beginning on the part of authorities in the Ministry of Religious Affairs toward bringing more representatives of the various religious communities themselves into the administrative and advisory levels of government.

Mission representatives also view Sim'an's appointment as significant because Baptists aren't yet recognized as a community under the millet system, in which matters of personal status are controlled by one's own religious community in Israel and other Middle Eastern countries. (Matters of personal status include such things as marriage, divorce, inheritance, registration of birth, change of religion registration, etc.)

Anglicans currently are the only Protestants officially recognized as a religious community under Israel's millet system, although Baptists and other Protestants have de facto recognition and are allowed to worship freely and have access to procedures for matters of personal status.

Sim'an will assist Christians in matters of personal status and in such matters as church repairs, cemetery maintenance, tax exemptions and contacts between the various Christian institutions and government ministries.

Although an employee of the Israeli government, Sim'an will continue to serve as a translator for the CSTC on a volunteer basis and will retain his post as editor of Al Jama'ah for the present, according to Dwight Baker, a Southern Baptist representative in Israel.

Sim'an, a graduate of the Nazareth Baptist Secondary School, was given the rating of one holding a bachelor of arts in theology by the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the basis of his advanced training and study with the Haifa-based CSTC, Baker said. The CSTC is affiliated with the Seminary Extension Department (SED) of the six Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries in the U. S. The SED recently awarded Sim'an the first diploma in its new pastoral ministries program.

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Beirut Fighting Continues;
Baptist Missionaries Stay

Baptist Press
4/6/76

RICHMOND (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries and their families are safe and plan to remain in Beirut, Lebanon, in spite of continuing violence and tension there, according to a cable relayed from the U. S. State Department to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board headquarters here.

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Although communication has been limited and sometimes impossible, Finley M. Graham, Southern Baptist missionary, was able to include the message in a cable to the State Department.

The Beirut Baptist School has been closed during parts of the fighting but classes continue at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary with seven students. While earlier during the country's civil war the area around the seminary was relatively quiet, reports indicate recent fighting has been fairly close, according to J. D. Hughey, the board's secretary for Europe and the Middle East.

Hughey's last telephone contact with missionaries in Beirut was late in March. In that conversation, the David W. King family reported spending the night in the recording studio at the seminary because the soundproof room was quieter and safer.

News reports indicate the death toll since April, 1975, when the war began, has reached 15,000 with another 32,000 injured.

Southern Baptist missionaries remaining in Beirut include the Grahams, the Kings, the James K. Raglands, the William O. Hems, Miss Emma E. Cooke and Miss Mabel Summers.

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SBC Mission Day Camp
Slated For Norfolk

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4/6/76

NORFOLK (BP)--While their parents conduct the business of the 119th annual Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here, June 15-17, children in grades 1-6 may attend a three-day mission day camp sponsored by the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

The third annual SBC Mission Day Camp, to be held at Lafayette Park, will provide mission games, crafts, nature studies, and field trips, and feature Southern Baptist home and foreign missionaries.

The camp will open on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings prior to convention sessions and will adjourn at the close of the afternoon sessions on Tuesday and Thursday and the morning session on Wednesday.

Children attending the mission day camp are scheduled to take field trips to Yorktown and the Norfolk Zoo.

Registration fee for the mission day camp is \$4 per day or \$10 for three days. The maximum fee for any one family regardless of the number of children is \$20 for the three-day session. The fee includes insurance, supplies, field trips, two noon meals and transportation between the convention center and the day camp site.

Frank Black, director of the Crusader Royal Ambassador department of the Brotherhood Commission, and Lloyd Jackson, Virginia Brotherhood director, will co-direct the camp. Other leadership for the camp will come from local churches and Virginia Royal Ambassador camp staff.

Black said last year's attendance of 360 children in Miami Beach is an indication of the popularity of the day camp with both children and parents.

"The mission day camp offers children a unique opportunity to meet and talk with missionaries and learn about missions in an outdoor setting," Black said.

Parents who wish to pre-register their children for the mission camp should send their name and address, and names and ages of children to: SBC Day Camp, Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar, Memphis, Tennessee 38104. All registration fees will be collected at the convention center.

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Courts Uphold Sex
Education Laws

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--California parents seeking to overthrow a state law which provides for sex education in the schools lost their appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court.

The high court declined without comment to hear a case brought by a group of parents from San Mateo, Calif., who contended that a portion of the state's education code calling for sex education and family planning courses violated their religious freedom.

The parents had already lost in the superior court of San Mateo County, in a California district court of appeal, and in the California Supreme Court.

California's education code states that school boards may not require pupils to attend sex education classes and provides that parents may request in writing that their children be excused from such classes.

Nevertheless, the parents complained that sex education "interfered with the free exercise of existing religious and spiritual beliefs" and "established new or different religious and spiritual beliefs."

In addition, the parents' complaint asserted that sex education courses amounted to an invasion of privacy by the state.

They pointed to a 1972 Supreme Court decision holding that Amish parents in Wisconsin had the right to withhold their children from the public schools for religious reasons.

The parents warned the court that if it declined to hear the case, "The way has been paved for total freedom of the state, through the public school system, to encroach upon and interfere with" religious liberty.

The County Board of Education, on the other hand, denied the contention that sex education courses seek to establish religion or deny religious liberty.

Rather, attorneys for the county argued, "The programs involve education and public health in which the state has a legitimate and compelling interest."

Earlier, the state court of appeals which ruled in the county's favor and against the parents had held the courses "are simply not religious in nature but primarily involve education and public health."

The challenged portion of California's education code does instruct teachers to refer their students to their parents and "religious counselors" for guidance and further information on human sexuality.

Teachers are also instructed to tell their pupils that a variety of views exist regarding sex and reproduction.

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Cooperative Program 14.34%
Ahead After Six Months

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4/6/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--At the halfway point of the 1975-76 fiscal year, the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program unified budget has received \$23,488,745, or 14.34 percent more than \$20,543,617 received at the same point last year.

The \$23.48 million does not include designated contributions during the first six months, which total \$25,525,684, compared to \$23,158,734 last year. That represents a 10.22 percent increase.

Combined Cooperative Program and designated receipts--\$49,014,429--show a 12.16 percent increase over last year's combined six-month total of \$43,702,350.

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During the month of March alone, Southern Baptist churches across 50 states gave \$3,553,717 in national Cooperative Program gifts--an 11.96 percent increase over last March--and \$4,769,058 in designated gifts, only \$10,886 or .23 percent more than last March.

The combined March figures add up to \$8,322,775. That's a 4.92 percent increase over \$7,932,180 given to both the Cooperative Program and in designated gifts last March.

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Pastor's Wife Hurt In
Alaska Plane Crash

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4/6/76

KETCHIKAN, Alaska (BP)--Mrs. Daniel Hood, wife of a Rome, Ga., Baptist pastor who was in Alaska for a revival crusade, was injured in the crash of an Alaskan Airlines jet plane here.

The Georgia woman reportedly received back injuries when the Boeing 727, carrying 49 passengers, ran off a runway and crashed into a ravine while landing here shortly after 8:00 a.m., April 5. One person was killed and eight others seriously injured.

Mrs. Hood and three of the plane's crew were flown to Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle, Wash., by a C-130 Coast Guard plane.

Hood, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church, Rome, Ga., and A. D. Smith, minister of Music at Lucas Avenue Baptist Church, Laurens, S. C., also were aboard the plane but were not injured.

The ministers and Mrs. Hood had been in Alaska participating in the 1976 state-wide simultaneous revival sponsored by the Alaska Baptist Convention and coordinated by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of mass evangelism ministries.

Bobby Sunderland, director of the department of mass evangelism ministries, said he talked with Hood and Smith and that both were "shook up" by the crash.

Earlier wire reports that Mrs. Hood was in critical condition were incorrect, although she has nerve damage and back injuries.

Sunderland said 75 preachers and musicians from 17 states were involved in the revival in 48 Alaska Baptist churches. The crusade began March 28 and was to last through April 9 in some of the churches, although some closed on April 3 including a revival led by Hood at First Baptist Church, Juneau.

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Gritz Takes Leave To
Recuperate From Illness

Baptist Press
4/6/76

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Jack L. Gritz, editor of the Baptist Messenger, state news publication for Southern Baptists in Oklahoma, has taken a three-month leave of absence to recuperate from a recurring illness, according to Joe L. Ingram, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Ingram said the paper's associate editors, Bob E. Mathews and Mrs. Raymond Hurt, will continue to produce the weekly publication and that he will take responsibility for the editorial page.

"We will 'hold the fort' until Dr. Gritz returns in June," said Ingram in an editorial in the Baptist Messenger. "All Oklahoma Baptists are grateful for the many years Dr. Gritz has served as editor, and I know you will join me in prayer for his recovery--and soon return to his responsibilities."

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